

VZCZCXRO0203
PP RUEHDBU RUEHPW
DE RUEHBUL #2507/01 2150722
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 030722Z AUG 07
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9468
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 002507

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CR, S/CT
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR HARRIMAN
OSD FOR SHIVERS
CENTCOM FOR CG CG CJTF-82, AND POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 8/02/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [ECON](#) [SNAR](#) [MARR](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT NURISTAN: SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT ON SECURITY,
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL SITUATION

REF: KABUL 372

Classified By: Pol Counselor SRosenberry for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) Security remains a concern in Nuristan, especially in the districts bordering Pakistan. Political activity continues to center on Governor Tamim who travelled to remote districts to firm up support and allegiance to the provincial and national governments. Construction on the more than 40 million dollars of road projects which may transform the province's is proceeding far slower than initial forecasts. Incremental progress has been made in extending health and education services in the province, but access remains beyond reach for most residents. There are no new opportunities for women beyond their traditional subsistence activities.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) On July 23 the Ambassador visited the PRT located in Kala Gush. The PRT Commander was upbeat and confident about his mission, which focuses on building local capacity in the security, development, and governance sectors. The Commander stressed the need for a USAID representative at the PRT. The Commander noted that the lack of security in the province has as much to do with common criminality as anti-government insurgency activities.

¶3. (SBU) Nuristan has experienced slow progress and small changes over the last six months (reftel). The lack of security remains a pressing concern. The government has so far delivered little and its promises of development remain unfulfilled. While roads in neighboring provinces are easing access to Nuristan from elsewhere in Afghanistan, for most Nuristanis, the majority of whom have never been in a motor vehicle, the expanding road network has yet to have an impact.

¶4. (U) Changes in other aspects of the people's lives in the last six months have been marginal at best: a few new schools have been built but the teachers have gained no new professional skills. Some new clinics have opened, but for most Nuristanis who live hours away from any officially sponsored health facility, they still have no choice but to rely on ineffective traditional remedies and healers.

Security

¶5. (SBU) The security situation has deteriorated somewhat with the onset of warmer weather. A spring offensive did not materialize and much of the province has remained peaceful. Nuristanis, continue to live with awareness that insurgents can operate with impunity except in the immediate vicinity of Coalition and police posts. Locals who harbor support the government say they cannot actively oppose anti-government groups for fear of violent retaliation.

¶6. (U) The two districts bordering Pakistan experienced a surge in violence during April and May. As of early July, insurgents were active in Kamdesh. Governor Tamim's initiative of late fall -- to establish a security council consisting of elders from the border districts who were to convince residents that there were no longer grounds for Jihad -- and that they could not expect development projects without improved security -- failed to stem the violence (Reftel). Tamim selected Fazel Ahad,

KABUL 00002507 002 OF 004

a respected Salafi religious leader from the region to head this council.

¶7. (SBU) Fazel Ahad, a respected Salafi religious leader whom Tamim tapped to head the council, was assassinated by unknown assailants on April 30 near Kamdesh. A few weeks earlier a man from Kamdesh district working for the Afghan company that guards a Coalition base in Kamdesh was murdered by insurgents who left messages warning others not to work for the Coalition. A short time later several drivers hauling supplies to Camp Keating were stopped on the road in Kamdesh district. Their vehicles were destroyed and some had their ears cut off. They were warned that if they were caught again they would be killed.

¶8. (U) In mid-May a convoy of Afghan National Army soldiers traveling on the same road on which Fazel Ahad was murdered, drove into an ambush. Eighteen soldiers were killed or are missing. Several days later, in another incident in the same region, a Coalition patrol was attacked, resulting in six Coalition troops wounded, and one soldier and an interpreter killed.

¶9. (U) In central Nuristan, an attack on the Waygal district police post was repelled in mid-June with one patrolman killed along with five of the attackers. On June 30, the post was attacked again with another patrolman killed and two wounded. In April, a vehicle carrying personnel from the National Directorate for Security office in western Nuristan's Nurgram district was destroyed by an IED, killing six and wounding several others. In late June, five doctors and a driver working for western NGOs were abducted in Doab district, apparently by criminals who demanded a ransom. Five were released within hours; the sixth hostage was released unharmed after several days.

¶10. (C) The profile of government security forces in the province has not changed significantly:

-- Afghan National Army (ANA): Operates only in tandem with Coalition forces.

-- Afghan Border Police (ABP): The ABP recently started receiving more Coalition attention following the departure of a troublesome commander. The ABP conducts patrols in the region but seldom operates on the actual mountainous border.

-- National Directorate for Security (NDS): Offices and personnel for the NDS are present in all districts but Mandol. Relations between NDS and the ANP and also the provinces' civil administration remain frosty, resulting in little effective cooperation.

-- Afghan National Police (ANP): Steps to reform the police have proceeded in fits and starts over the past six months. Professional officers assigned to replace less qualified district police chiefs in several cases either failed to report or left their posts shortly after they arrived. In June, President Karzai announced a replacement for the provincial police chief who was universally regarded as not up to the job. As of late June, ANP in the province are at 56% of their authorized strength. Slow recruiting together with police who are AWOL or who have otherwise abandoned their posts account for what has been a chronic shortfall.

-- Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP): Plans to recruit, vet and train 550 ANAP for Nuristan unraveled in April when recruits were dispatched for training without being vetted properly. Two groups have completed their two week training at the Jalalabad

KABUL 00002507 003 OF 004

Regional Training Center and have taken up their duties in eastern and central Nuristan.

¶11. (U) The overall effectiveness of police in Nuristan is little changed. Although new facilities including barracks are being built at the provincial center, there are no purpose-built facilities for police in Nuristan.

¶12. (SBU) Governor Tamim has complained again that Nuristan province lacks a force capable of providing security for the residents who live in small, isolated villages. Insurgent groups move with impunity, intimidating the people into silence. He said that the number of police assigned to each district is inadequate and the number of policemen who are actually present and on duty at any time is usually less than half the number assigned to the district. Most police remain at the district headquarters and seldom venture out on patrols. The Governor lamented that the ANP and ANAP are not trained, equipped or have the mandate to challenge the better-armed and belligerent insurgents who are present in the province.

¶13. (SBU) For Nuristanis, the Afghan government's ability to provide security and enforce the law remains their measure of government effectiveness. While security has improved in the small pockets where police are present, well supplied and ably commanded, these areas have not grown markedly since the last report.

Politics

¶14. (U) Political activity in Nuristan continues to revolve around Governor Tamim. He continued to make long visits to Nuristan's isolated districts. In January and February he spent nearly a month in Nurgram and Doab districts. There he convened district-wide councils where he urged community leaders to halt opium cultivation and to take responsibility for security in their districts. He succeeded in getting communities to agree in writing to ban opium cultivation and to punish those who refused to comply. He also personally participated in small-scale poppy eradication efforts.

¶15. (U) Tamim, kept his deputy, Marmur Halim, in Kamdesh district to work with the security council and attempt to manage local disputes, which threaten to destabilize the province. The governor frequently bemoans his inability to find competent, qualified staff. The isolation of Parun, the lack of decent housing, the arduous and expensive travel to and from Parun, combined with the low pay have frustrated Tamim's efforts to recruit staff. He has authority to hire 59 persons to work for the province but has only filled six positions.

Economics

¶16. (U) Prospects of a good year for crops as a result of abundant winter snows do little to allay the longer-term problems facing the province caused by increased population, climatic change, and unsustainable exploitation activities, particularly illegal logging without reforestation.

¶17. (U) Work started on over \$40 million in CERP-funded road projects. Work also continued on roads in the nearby provinces that will link Nuristan to the rest of the country. Several other smaller-scale road projects are underway. These

KABUL 00002507 004 OF 004

will link villages lying in side valleys to the CERP roads being built in the main valleys. The initial contract completion dates for the projects have proven to be unrealistic and have been extended by several months.

Cultural/Social Situation

¶18. (U) Cultural and social life remains largely unchanged, but several new initiatives have been announced. In late June, the World Bank announced it is funding 14 schools in Nuristan. On July 1 the Indian Government announced that it will fund school construction in Nuristan as part of a four million dollar grant to build 38 schools throughout the country.

¶19. (U) Two new health facilities have been completed during the reporting period in western Nuristan. Another clinic at Parun is nearing completion. Training has been conducted for teams to staff Basic Health Posts, the small community-based stations where first aid treatment can be received and simple ailments treated.

¶20. (U) The International Medical Corps, an NGO headquartered in the U.S. has taken over from the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan as the implementing agency for the Ministry of Public Health's Basic Package of Health Services. The change is not expected

to materially affect the delivery of services.

¶21. (U) Conditions for women have not changed materially. One small organization for local women in Pashki village, has been established near the provincial center in Parun. This aims to develop commercial skills for sewing and needlepoint. However, the lack of personnel elsewhere and the challenges for women facilitators to travel in the province hinders efforts to replicate this elsewhere.

WOOD